

PC

TWISTED

TALES

\$1.50

NO. 6

RECOMMENDED
FOR MATURE
READERS





c/o Pacific Comics / 8423 Production Ave. / San Diego, CA 92121.

Dear Mr. Jones and Mrs. Campbell,

I am a mature reader and I for one cannot find any anti-racist stance in "Bangs Lessons". If your magazine wants to make a statement against bigotry, why couldn't it have been done constructively, as in R.C.'s classic "Judgement Day"? In its time, "Judgement Day" drew a very strong and daring moral against bigotry without graphic displays of violence and without portraying a black man as something less than human.

I am the manager of Coppel's Comic World of Silver Springs. I live my life by certain standards, and I carry those standards into the way I run my store. If the standards you set for your book cannot reach my ideals, then by the colors that I will not sell pornography, I cannot sell your book.

I have an obligation to my subscription customers to fill their orders, all other copies of the Twisted Tales go have been sent back to the distributor.

Thomas Hidding
Coppel's Comic World
6117 Preston Street
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Twisted People,

"Bangs Lessons" was a very disturbing story, though not for the reasons stated by April. "Somerset Holmes" Campbell in her editorial, a reader would have to be pretty dense not to see the strong anti-racist statements behind this story. For me, the story raised the old issue of "how far is too far?" At what point, if any, should a book like Twisted Tales draw the line in terms of violence and gore? And at what point does a sense of realism become the self-righteous censorship of a Puritan? *Western on the Move* Mystery!

After having read Warren's books during their ultra-violent phase between 1972 and 1974, I thought that nothing could jolt me. I was wrong. The punch at the end of "Bangs Lessons" actually shocked me. Read Holmes' straightforward, name-of-fist style of artwork, reminiscent of some of Johnny Craig's and Bill Elder's work, gave this story a lot of punch, because he didn't attempt to "soften" the violence, or disguise it by having it occur just outside the edge of the panels. If Bruce and Rand did intend for this story to be an anti-racist statement first and foremost, however, I think their sensationalist approach to the conclusion obscured their point. I'm afraid that "Bangs Lessons" and the accompanying editorial remind me of a school that prints photos of the mutilated bodies of war-time victims, and then proclaims it did so in the name of the "public's right to know," assuming the First Amendment, but not really considering anyone that it's stated motives aren't a bit suspect.

On the positive side, I think Bruce did manage to skillfully touch on the Lovecraftian notion that often slides about the base of the human brain, covering from the light like insects under a rock. "Bangs Lessons" was less about the evil of racism than the subconscious horrors on we all carry around in one form or another, and what happens when they escape. This is what forms the very essence and core of horror literature: tapping those dark inner regions.

All in all, an interesting work.

Mike Sornon
28 Old Glen Road
Carvers Station, NJ 07061

Dear Pacific Professionals,

I would like to comment on your thought-provoking story "Bangs Lessons". April was right when she said that a person is not living in the real world if they close to deny important relevant issues. It (the story) makes you think about humanity, and the wonderful gift of love that we all have, and how we can prevent even the simplest forms of love, and how we sometimes lose sight of what makes men different from beasts—his compassion and ability to discern between right and wrong. That we are all brothers and sisters and just, relations underneath the outer covering of our bodies. Some have to learn these lessons the hard way, while others learn it day by day, by living, by breathing. Each of us must travel his or her own darker road, which in some way is just as unique as our humanity, and, after all, is not all that makes life worth living! Dreaming, making, praying for the day that the majority of us dream about. . . . I will put it in the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "Let the black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and girls as sisters and brothers. . . . all of God's children, black and white men, Jews and gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last, free at last, great God almighty, we are free at last'."

Thanks for listening, guys. And here's to the most innovative "new" company in graphic storytelling. For the "New Era in Comics," make more Pacific.

Sincerely,
Larry Mosley
1461 Grand Concourse, #18
Bronx, New York 10452

TWISTED TALES: Vol. 1, No. 6, January, 1984. Published bimonthly by Pacific Comics. Bruce Jones and Agent Campbell, Editors. Bill and Steve Salzman, Publishers. Paul Tellerage, Production Coordinator. Jon Hertz, Ramon Montano, and Ray Sawyer, Circulation Managers. Office of publication: 8423 Production Avenue, San Diego, California 92121-0276, U.S.A. Telephone (619) 448-2696. TWISTED TALES is a TM/SM by Bruce Jones. Reproduction without express permission is prohibited. No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the copyright holder(s). No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions in this magazine and anything of real persons or institutions is intended, and any such similarity is purely coincidental. "Feds of the West" story ©1984 by Bruce Jones Associates, artwork ©1984 by Frank Springer and Mike Mignola. "Planet Parody" story ©1984 by Bruce Jones Associates, artwork ©1984 by Jim Sullivan and Arthur Sudyman. "The Test" story ©1984 by Bruce Jones Associates, artwork ©1984 by J. Williams and Ed Meyer. Cover art ©1984 by Frank Springer. A Bruce Jones Associates Production. Printed in the United States of America.

BLACK EDITION



YOU. ILLUSION

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE INCREDIBLE PAIN, THE SEARING BURNING AGONY OF IT. SO I WON'T EVEN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE IT. ONE HAS TO LIVE IT TO APPRECIATE IT FULLY. I LIVED IT. I LIVED EVERY BRAM STOKER INSIDE MY SCREAMING MICRO-SECOND OF IT, AND THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT—NOTHING ANYONE COULD DO ABOUT IT. NO ONE BUT INGLE. THAT IS. AND INGLE'S WOULD-SHIT-COOKING-EGGS INGLE'S WOULD-N'T EVEN TRY. / OH, HE SAID HE WAS TRYING. HE SAID HE WAS DOING HIS BEST. BUT ALL I SAW WAS THE ENDLESS ROUNDS OF BLACKLACK. THE SUN COMING UP OVER THE TREES IN NO BLACKLACK. AND ALL I FELT WAS THE UNENDING TORTURE FLOODING THROUGH ME, PRAYING, SCREAMING FOR RELEASE...



WAS IT ONLY THIS MORNING THAT I FIRST SAW INGLE? IT SEEMS LIKE CENTURIES AGO... SOME AGO...



STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: JOHN BOLTON
Letters: Carrie McCarthy Colors: Joe Chiodo



EEEK!



OH DEAR, I'M SOO SORRY - DID I HURT YOU? HOW CLUNGY...

OH, THAT'S - IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT...



D I DIDN'T REALIZE ANYONE WAS OVER THERE -

JUST MOVED IN / DELIGHTFUL LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD / I HAVE AN ORANGE TREE IN MY YARD / AN ORANGE TREE IN OKLAHOMA, CAN YOU IMAGINE?

AH, IS THAT MR. MARKHAM?



HELLO...

AFTERNOON, MYBOY / POLES IS THE NAME / HOW DO YOU DO? SO NICE TO MEET SUCH A SWEET YOUNG COUPLE / ISN'T THIS DELIGHTFUL? I LIVED HERE QUITE A SPELL, HAVE YOU?



WE JUST--

LOVELY NEIGHBORHOOD? I WAS JUST TELLING YOUR BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WIFE / AWAY DATE NEIGHBORHOOD / I HAVE AN ORANGE TREE, WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? TELL ME, ARE ALL THE YOUNG WOMEN HERE AS INCREDIBLE AS YOUR SWEET LADY HERE. BUT COME, MY DEAR, LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YOU!





"IT WAS DURING THE
COURSE OF ONE OF THOSE
TYPICALLY HEROIC DREAMS
WE ALL HAVE - YOU KNOW,
SHINING KNIGHT SLAYS
THE DRAGON, WINS THE
FAIR MAIDEN -



"AS I STOOD THERE
WATCHING MY BEAUTIFUL
PRIZE, I BECAME AWARE
OF THE POWER
FLOODING THROUGH ME...
THE COMPLEX, I HAD
GIVEN THE CORNER - THE
YOUNG LADY, I WISHED
HER BLONDE - AND
SUDDENLY SHE WAS
BLONDE."

"THAT WAS THE
BEGINNING, BUT I
DIDN'T STOP THERE.
I WISHED HER A
REDHEAD, SHE
BECAME A REDHEAD.
I WISHED HER
PLUMPER, AND SHE
WAS PLUMPER.
I WISHED SHE
SLIMMER, AND SHE
DREYED. I WISHED
THREE OF HER, SIX
OF HER, A DOZEN
OF HER, AND MY
DESIRES WERE
FULFILLED."



"I COULD CHANGE THE LOCATIONS
FROM A TANGLED WOOD TO A
DESERT ISLE. I COULD HAVE
A SINGLE WOMAN OR A
THOUSAND WOMEN, EACH
MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE
ONE BEFORE, AND EACH
VIVID AND BREATHING AND
ALIVE DOWN TO THE SMALLEST
DETAIL."



"AND THE BEST
PART WAS, I
COULD CONTROL
WHEN I WOKED
UP, WHEN I
CAME BACK TO
THE REAL
WORLD - AND
YOU KNOW
WHAT? I
I DON'T WANT TO
GO BACK TO THE
REAL WORLD -
WHY SHOULD I?
WHY? WHEN I
COULD HAVE
EVERYTHING
I EVER - AND NEW
DREAMED-UP IN MY
SLEEPING WORLD?"

"THAT'S WHEN GOT THE
IDEA... TO CHECK INTO A
HOSPITAL... TO COMPLAIN
OF A PHONY BACKACHE
TO PUT MYSELF ASLEEP
FOREVER."

"THEY TAKE CARE
OF ME, YOU SEE. FEED
ME INTRAVENOUSLY,
LIKE A COMA PATIENT
AND I DREAM ON AND
ON IN THIS BEAUTIFUL
WORLD OF THE MIND..."









WON'T STOP... ENDLESS, HOPEDOWNY SHUFFLE HOURS
AND DAYS... THOUGHT KEYS PECKING AT MY
TORTURED BRAIN... COULD INGLES MAKE IT ALL RIGHT
BECAUSE HE'S ENTERED IT... SHOULD HE MAKE IT
AND ME... OR IS THIS HIS WAY OF
REVENGEING ME?...





ELRIC OF MELNIBONE #6 COMING IN JANUARY

THE THRILLING CONCLUSION OF
MICHAEL MOORCOCK'S
SWORD & SORCERY CLASSIC



**MICHAEL T. GILBERT
P. CRAIG RUSSELL
ROY THOMAS**

STORMBRINGER

PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

EVENING WALK



STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: JOHN TOTLESEN
Colors: Danylaasacc





PACIFIC PRESENTS THREE GREAT STORIES!

AN ONGOING TITLE PRESENTING
NEW FEATURES

PACIFIC PRESENTS

THE WILDLY PLAUSIBLE NIGHT OF
EERIE SMITH
and
WALTER WEARY

WALTER: I
WANT TO BE A
SCIENTIST!
WALTER: I
WANT TO BE A
SCIENTIST!
WALTER: I
WANT TO BE A
SCIENTIST!

WE'VE REACHED
PUELLERS
IN THE
MYSTERIE!

GREAT--

**TIM CONRAD
STEVE DITKO
WILL MEUGNIOT**

MISSING MAN *Varity* BY WILL MEUGNIOT

PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

HOME TIES

IT HADN'T BEEN A GREAT WEEK. EVERYTHING WAS SET FOR THE LEFT-HANDED GUY. THEY'D HIRSD THIS BORNSENILUS FROM TV NAMED DEAN TO DIRECT AND, AFTER MONTHS OF NEGOTIATION, DEAN HAD COME OFF HIS GIANT HIGH-HORSE LONG ENOUGH TO CONSENT TO PLAY THE LEAD. WE'RE GOING FOR COLOR, SCOPE, THE WHOLE WORKS. SOLLY TELLS ME... THEN PRESTO, DEAN WRAPS HIS FORTSOME AROUND AN OLD FORD, WARNER'S JETTS SCARED AND OUT BOSS THE COLOR AND BIG BUDGET ALONG WITH THE STAR. BRANADO SAYS NO WAY AND HOLSEN IS DOING SOME NICE THING ABOUT A MID-WESTERN PIONE. THEY STICK US WITH SOME NEW KID NAMED NEWMAN. FORGET IT. I TELL SOLLY. YOU CAN SHOVE YOUR BILLY THE KID BPC. DO RATHER BE WORK WITH JOSE ON THE MID-WESTERN PIONE THING. YOU WON'T LIKE IT? SOLLY WARNS ME. "IT'S LOCATION SHOOTING..." "I LOVE THE MIDWEST." I REPLY. HUH, YOU EVER BEEN TO SALINA, KANSAS...



STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: MIKE HOFFMAN
Letters: Carmel McCarthy Colors: Joe Chiodo





I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! HARRY WAS ALIVE AND WELL! I DASHED INSIDE, BRAYING WITH QUESTIONS...



I CHARGED INTO MY ROOM... THEN I CHECKED INTO THE LOCAL PHONE BOOTH...



FEELING SOMEWHAT FOOLISH, I WALKED UP TO THE VICTORIAN DOOR AND KNOCKED AWAY...





ANGELIQUE—T

SHE'LL BE DOWN
IN A MINUTE...
CARE FOR A
DRINK?

DO CARE FOR SOME
EXPLANATION, IS
WHAT I'D CARE
FOR!



I DON'T SUPPOSE
YOU'D CONSIDER SIMPLY
CLIMBING BACK INTO
YOUR CAR AND DRIVING
AWAY, WOULD YOU?

NO, I DON'T SUPPOSE
I WOULD.

I THOUGHT NOT, BUT
OHAY, HERE IT IS...
THE WHOLE STORY...
BIT BACK...



I WAS IN TOWN ON
BUSINESS—A WESTERN—
THREE YEARS AGO
WHEN I HAPPENED BY
THE HOUSE IN MY CAR.

I SAW A LOVELY
FEMALE FIGURE
SILHOUETTED IN THE UP
STAIRS WINDOW. I
ALSO NOTICED THAT
THE DOWNSTAIRS
DOOR WAS Ajar...



I STOPPED AND APPROACH-
ED THE HOUSE, INTENDING
TO WARN THE OWNERS
THAT THEIR DOOR HAD
BEEN LEFT OPEN. I KNOCK-
ED, BUT NO ONE ANSWERED...
SO I PUSHED OPEN THE
DOOR AND STOPPED INSIDE.



"AS I STARTED ACROSS THE PORCH,
A FIGURE APPEARED ON THE STAIR-
CASE..."

"THE LOVELY FIGURE OF THE WOMAN
I SAW IN THE WINDOW..."



"SHE WAS RAVISHING, THE MOST
BEAUTIFUL CREATURE I'D EVER
Laid EYES UPON..."



44. HERE SHE IS NOW
MEET ANGELIQUE!



I LOOKED UPON THE MOST
ENTICINGLY BEAUTIFUL
WOMAN I HAD EVER SEEN...

NO NEED TO STAND
FOR ANGELIQUE,
PHIL...

LOVELY,
BUT SHE?

EXQUISITE!



NEVER MIND, OLD
MAN, ANGELIQUE
CAN LIGHT HER OWN
CIGARETTE...



NO MATTER WHAT
HAPPENS NOW, PHIL,
DON'T MOVE OR
INTERFERE IN
ANY WAY...



THERE WAS A SUDDEN
KNOCKING AT THE
DOOR. IMMEDIATELY
ANGELIQUE ROSE TO
ANSWER IT...



A TALL DARK MAN IN FORMAL
EVENING ATTIRE STOOD THERE.
ANGELIQUE SAID HIM ENTER,
THEY EMBRACED...



WHO IS IT?
AER BROTHER?

NO PATIENT,
YOU'LL SEE.

SILENCE FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THEN--
SUDDENLY--THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUNDS
OF LOVEMAKING.



HURRY, WHAT
THE DEAL--??







Hollywood Times

SEPTEMBER 11, 1993

**ANOTHER
DISAPPEARANCE
PLAGUES
HOLLYWOOD
COMMUNITY**

HOLLYWOOD, CA — Police are still baffled by the sudden disappearance of Philip C. Brooks, last seen at the Los Angeles train depot heading east on a business trip.



VANGUARD 2.
COMING DECEMBER



PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

ROOMERS

THE ARTHRITIS WAS VERY BAD TODAY IN HIS LEFT SHOULDER AND KNEE AND BY ELEVEN THAT MORNING HE HAD BEGUN TO HOPE QUITE EARLY THAT THE FRY PANNY GIRL, CAROL, MAYN'T-HE COULD NEVER REMEMBER HER NAME! WOULD COME WITH THE GROCERIES, OTHERWISE, HE'D BE FORCED TO MAKE THE HAIRY, SHOULDER-BLOCK-AND-A-HALF JOURNEY TO HOLMAN'S MARKET AND BACK AND HE DEFINITELY DID NOT WANT TO DO THAT. HE HAD MANAGED PROMPTLY AT SIX—JUST AS HE DID EVERY MORNING—AND HAD SHAVED AND UNLOCKED AND OPENED THE WINDOW TO LET THE WARM MORNING BREATH IN AND FETCHED HIS NEWSPAPER, AND DRANK HIS RITUAL GLASS OF TROSCANA. IT WAS ALL HE HAD FOR BREAKFAST YEARS AND HE WOULD HAVE EATEN TWO LARGE EGGS OVER EASY, THREE SLICES OF BACON, A COUPLE OF PEECES OF TOAST LOADED WITH JAM, AND SEVERAL CUPS OF COFFEE. THAT WAS WHEN THERE WAS CONSIDERABLY MORE HAIR ON HIS HEAD AND MONEY IN HIS POCKET AND HE COULD HAVE BEEN TO HOLMAN'S MARKET IF THERE HAD BEEN ONE THEN.

NOT TODAY. TODAY HE FELT HE HAD NO BREAKFAST NUMBER, LIKE THE REST OF HIS LIFEMARK ROUTINE, DON'T WORRY YOURSELF UNTIL NOON. CONVERSELY, HE FOUND IT NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO SLEEP LATER THAN SIX IN THE MORNING AND PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTING TO STAY AWAKE LATER THAN NINE AT NIGHT, WHEN, BY ELEVEN O'CLOCK, HANSEN'DO BEGAN TO URGE AT LAST. HE CHECKED THE BUNDA CUPBOARD ABOVE THE SINKFUL SINK AND FOUND IT, LIKE OLD MOTHER HUBBARD'S BONE BARK, IT IRRITATED HIM, NOT BECAUSE IT WAS EMPTY, BUT BECAUSE HE'D AWAKENED NOT REMEMBERING IT WAS EMPTY. HIS MINDFUL, LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE ABOUT HANSLAND RAILING.



HE'D FINISHED WITH THE PAPER BY EIGHT O'CLOCK, HAVING READ ONLY ABOUT A QUARTER OF IT. THIS WAS ALSO RITUAL AND WAS BECAUSE HIS EYES BEGAN TO HURT BY THEN AND BECAUSE HE WAS BECOMING LESS AND LESS INTERESTED IN WHAT THE WORLD WAS DOING TO ITSELF, THAT LEFT A GAP OF THREE HOURS TO FILL BETWEEN NEWSPAPER AND LUNCH. USUALLY HE WENT FOR A WALK, BUT TODAY THE ARTHRITIS SAID NO.

HE HAD NEVER OWNED A TV AND HIS RADIO WAS BROKEN. HE'D HAD IT FIXED TWICE BUT EACH WHEN IT WAS WORKING, ALL HE COULD GET WAS BLINDING ROCK-AND-ROLL AND HE DON'T LIKE ROCK-AND-ROLL. WHAT HE LIKED WAS GABRIEL HEARDER BUT GABRIEL HEATER WAS DEAD NOW, SO HE USUALLY JUST SAT IN THE CHAIR AND WATCHED THE STREET BELOW AND LISTENED TO THE HEARDER.



STORY: BRUCE JONES ART: MICHELLEZZI
Letters: Carrie McCarthy Colors: Joe Orlando

HE THOUGHT ABOUT MANY THINGS BUT MOSTLY HE THOUGHT ABOUT DEATH. THEY WERE NOT HORRIBLE THOUGHTS OR EXERCISES IN SELF-PITY BUT RATHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AS TO THE PROPER MANNER HE DID NOT FEAR DEATH BUT HE FEARED THE HUMILIATION OF IT. IF HE DIED IN BED, FOR INSTANCE, IT MIGHT BE DAYS, EVEN WEEKS, BEFORE SOMEONE FOUND HIM, AND BY THEN HE WOULD SMELL, AND HE DID NOT WANT HIS FINAL ACT IN LIFE TO BE THAT OF BEING A MALODOROUS SLEAZEBAG TO SOMEONE ELSE...



SOMETIMES HE WOULD FALL ASLEEP IN THE SOFA CHAIR WHILE WATCHING THE TRAFFIC. HE HAD BEGUN TO DO THIS MORE AND MORE FREQUENTLY DURING THE PAST YEAR BUT HE DIDN'T MIND BECAUSE SLEEPING AND DREAMING, REALLY, WERE OFTEN MORE PLEASANT THAN THE DULL ROUTINE OF HIS WAKING LIFE. SOME DAYS HE WOULD DO BOTH SO CONTINUOUSLY THAT REALITY AND IMAGINATION DRIFTED TOGETHER AND HE COULD NOT SEPARATE THE TWO BUT THAT WAS OKAY TOO BECAUSE WHO WAS TO SAY DREAMING WAS NOT ONE FORM OF REALITY?



HE WAS NOT ALONE IN THE SINGLE ROOM. BEHIND THE WALL, BEHIND THE CUPBOARD THERE LIVED A FAMILY OF MICE. HE RARELY SAW THEM BUT HE HEARD THEM OFTEN ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT. THEY CONVERSED AND RELAXED AND GORGED AND DID NOT REMEMBER IT IS MICE DO BETWEEN THE WALLBOARD SEPARATING HIS APARTMENT FROM THE ONE NEXT DOOR. IN THE BEGINNING HE HAD COMPLAINED TO HIS LANDLORD, THE SUPER, BUT NOTHING HAD COME OF IT. SHE HAD EXPLAINED THAT THE EXTERMINATORS WANTED MORE THAN SHE COULD PAY...



HE HAD DECIDED THAT THE BEST PLACE TO DIE WAS IN THE TUB BECAUSE THE WATER WOULD WASH HIM FOR SOME TIME. BUT, OF COURSE, THEN HE WOULD BE FOUND NAKED. WAS IT WORSE, HE WONDERED, TO BE FOUND SMELLING OR TO BE FOUND NAKED? IT WAS A DIFFICULT QUESTION... HE DID NOT KNOW WHY IT WAS IMPORTANT TO HIM NOW HE WAS FOUND, ONLY THAT IT WAS...



HE WAS ALWAYS A YOUNG MAN AGAIN WHEN HE DREAMED. HE NEVER DREAMED ABOUT HIS CURRENT AGE OR HIS LIFE IN THE APARTMENT. SOMETIMES HE WAS IN HIS THIRTIES OR FORTIES AND USUALLY HE WAS RUNNING SOMEWHERE VERY FAST AND HE COULD HEAR THE WIND IN HIS EARS. IT WAS MOST OFTEN IN THE COUNTRY OR ALONG A SUNNY BEACH. SINCE HE DREAMED ABOUT A GIRL AND THEY HAD SEXUAL RELATIONS AND THAT SURPRISED HIM, BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HE'D FORGOTTEN ABOUT SUCH THINGS...



ONE NIGHT HE HAD WAKENED TO FIND ONE OF THE MICE IN BED WITH HIM. GREATLY, HE DID NOT WELL OR KICK OR THREATEN ABOUT. HE SIMPLY SWITCHED GUILTY AS THE MAMMAL CLIMBED GRABBERLY OVER THE HILLS AND VALLEYS OF HIS BODY. AFTER STANDING OCCASIONALLY ON ITS HIND LEGS AND BATHING THE AIR, ITS WHITE WINGS ILLUMINATED BY COLD ROOM LIGHT FROM THE WINDOW. AT LAST IT HAD GRIEVED OFF THE BED AND GONE TO SLEEP IN THE CUPBOARD AND HE HAD GONE BACK TO SLEEP...



OTHER THINGS LIVED WITH HIM, BESIDES THE ROACHES, THE APARTMENT BUILDING WAS OVERFLOWING WITH ROACHES AND THERE WERE A MUCH GREATER ABUNDANCE THAN THE ROACHES, WHICH HE EASILY SAW. THE ROACHES HE SAW BOTH DAY AND NIGHT—DURING QUICKLY FROM UNDER A CHAIR, OR WALKING LIVELY ACROSS A WALL—AND THEY GOT INTO EVERYTHING. HE USED TO HIT THEM WITH HIS SHOE OR A ROLLED NEWSPAPER AND AT ONE TIME HE BOUGHT BLACK FLIES REGULARLY, BUT THERE WAS NO KISSING UP WITH THEM AND, BESIDES, IT GOT EXPENSIVE. ONLY ONCE HAD HE GOTTEN UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT AND TURNED ON THE LIGHT...THE CEILING, WALLS AND FURNITURE HAD APPEARED TO MOVE...HE HAD NEVER GOTTEN UP AT NIGHT AGAIN.



WHEN HE GO OUT—WHEN THE ATHLETE LET HIM—HE WENT STRAIGHT TO HOLMAN MARKET OR SAT OUT FRONT ON ONE OF THE BENCHES PROVIDED IN THE CENTER SQUARE LANE OF LORNO STREET. THERE HE WOULD WATCH THE CARS GOBY BY ON BOTH SIDES. HE WOULD LIKED TO HAVE GONE TO THE PARK BUT IT WAS TOO FAR TO WALK AND CLOTHING AND SHOES WERE EXPENSIVE. HE HAD SAVED FOR THREE WEEKS ONCE AND TAKEN THE BUS TO THE PARK AND IT HAD RAINED. NOW HE JUST SAT IN THE BENCHES OUTSIDE HIS APARTMENT, BUT NOT TOO LONG BECAUSE THE EXHAUST PUMPS MADE HIM DIZZY...



THEY SAID THE ANGELS HAD DONE IT. MAYN BUT DON'T WORRY BECAUSE THE GONNA ALERT EVERYBODY IN THE BUILDING. RIGHT? HANG LORNO. ON MAYN? HE HAD WANTED TO ASK THE BOY WHAT AN "ANGEL" WAS BUT THE BOY LOOKED ANGRY TO LEAVE AND SLIPPED BACK OUT THE WINDOW AND HE NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN. THE BUILDING HAD NEVER BEEN SET AFIRE...



HE HATED THE ROACHES BECAUSE THEY WERE STUPID AND LUCKY HE SAW NO REASON WHY GOD HAD PUT THEM ON THE EARTH. HE DEVISED SEVERAL WAYS TO WEEDAN LORNOSEAL ON THE ROACHES AND BOWLING THEM ALIVE WAS HIS FAVORITE METHOD. HE WOULD CREEP SILENTLY TO THE HOT PLATE AND TURN ON THE HEAT UNDER THE KETTLE WHILE THEY WERE GATHERING IN THE BOWL TO DRINK. HE HAD READ SOMEWHERE THAT THEY COULD SO HIGHER WITHOUT FOOD BUT MUST DRINK EVERY SEVEN DAYS. WHEN ENOUGH HAD GATHERED IN THE BOWL AND THE WATER WAS BOILING IN THE KETTLE, HE WOULD SILENTLY POUR IT IN THE BOWL AND WATCH THEM AGONIZE AND SCREAM AND DIE. IT MADE HIM FEEL GOOD FOR AWHILE...



ONE DAY TWO SUMMERS AGO HE HAD LOOKED UP FROM HIS BATH CHAIR TO FIND A PUERTO RICAN BOY CLIMBING THROUGH HIS WINDOW. HE HAD NOT BEEN FRIGHTENED BECAUSE HE KNEW HE HAD NOTHING WORTH STEALING. THE BOY HAD BLACK HAIR, OLIVE SKIN AND A THICK ACCENT. HE SAID, "HEY DE! MAYN, YOU ALL ALONG HERE? LISTEN, THE ANGELS IS SICK OF THIS FEMERANT SHIT AND HE DONNA BURN THIS PLACE DOWN. YOU DIS IT? SEE, IF IT BURNS DOWN THE CITY GOTTA BUILD A NEW ONE. YOU HUP?"



IT WAS PAST ONE NOW AND IT LOOKED LIKE THE RAY, SIMPLY GIRL WASHY GOING WITH THE GROCERIES. HE WOULD HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL EVENING WHEN THE ATHLETE USUALLY SURFED. THEN GO DOWN TO HOLMAN MARKET. BUT EVEN IF HE DIDN'T EAT TODAY, IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST TIME HE WOULDN'T DIE. NOT YET. HE EVEN CREEPT ACROSS THE ROOM AND LIGHTED ON THE TABLE WHERE THE PHONE USED TO BE. OF ALL THE THINGS HE USED TO OWN HE MISSED THE PHONE THE MOST...



IT HAD NOT ONLY BEEN A DIRECT LINE TO THE POLICE STATION, BUT HE USED TO PRETEXT THAT IT WOULD RING AND THAT BARRY WOULD BE ON THE OTHER END. BARRY HAD ONLY CALLED ONCE IN THE TEN YEARS HE'D OWNED THE PHONE, BUT HE HAD NEVER STOPPED ASKING, THAT ONE TIME BARRY HAD CALLED, HE'D TALKED FOR ONLY THREE MINUTES AND ASKED TO BORROW TWENTY DOLLARS. HE HAD TOLD BARRY THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE SUCH FINE DOLLARS, BUT THAT IT HAD BEEN A LOT THICKER WITH HIM AND WOULD HE PLEASE CALL AGAIN, SOMET' BARRY HADN'T, AND THE PHONE COMPANY TOOK AWAY HIS PHONE A MONTH LATER...



HE STARED AT THE EMPTY TABLE A LONG TIME AND IT SEEMED THAT HE MIGHT HAVE DROPTED OFF A MOMENT... HE WASN'T SURE... AND THAT'S WHEN HE FIRST NOTICED THE SPIDER'S WEB. IT WAS STRUNG NEATLY AND EFFICIENTLY BETWEEN THE TABLE AND THE WALL, AND HE GRUNTED AND SCOWLED AND STOOD UP WITH THE RESOLVE TO REMOVE IT. HE WAS OLD AND WEAK, BUT HE WOULD NOT HAVE COUSINERS IN HIS HOUSE...



HE GRABBED UP THE BROOM LEANING AGAINST THE WALL AND PREPARED TO RUSSIA AGAIN THE OFFEND-ER'S WEB. BUT THEN HE SAW A CURIOUS THING: HANGING HERE AND THERE IN THE SILKON STRANDS WERE THE TEN EMPTY HOURS OF SEVERAL ONCE HOT REACHES, TRAVELING LIKE GRIN TECHNIQUES FROM THE HUNTER'S SPICY MANTLE. HE STAYED HIS HAND FROM WHISTLING THE BROOM AND BENT CLOSER...



HIGH ON THE SHIMMERING THREADS, TUCKED AWAY SAFELY IN A CONICAL TUNNEL WAS THE HUNTER, ITS BLACK, GLOSSY BODY HANGING LIKE AN EGG. AND A SILENT, WATCHFUL RETREAT, ONE STALK-LIKE LEG GENTLY TOUCHING THE KEY FINGER THAT WOULD ALERT IT SHOULD ANYTHING INTERESTING BLUNDER INTO THE CONFINEDLY CONSTRUCTED SNARE. THE OLD MAN BECAME FASCINATED...



HE HAD NEVER LOOKED CLOSELY AT A SPIDER WEB BEFORE. THERE IN THE PADING AFTERNOON LIGHT, ITS DARK CABLES GUSTINED LIKE SPIN GOLD. ALL THE DELICATE CRAFTSMANSHIP BROUGHT TO BREEDING LIFE HE FOUND HIMSELF STARRING FOR SEVERAL MINUTES, INTRODUCED BY THE COMPLEX LINEAR BEAUTY INTO HIS LEFT EYE ACHED TERRIBLY AND HE WAS FORCED TO SET DOWN AGAIN. EVEN THEN HE WATCHED FOR NEARLY AN HOUR, HOPING THAT THE BUILDUP MIGHT CLIMB DOWN INTO FULL VIEW. ANYTHING THAT KILLED ROACHES, HE REASONED, COULDN'T BE ALL BAD...



A RAP AT THE DOOR BROKE HIS REVERIE. THERE WAS A MUFFLED, PLAYFUL VOICE THEN THE DOOR THUMPED AND HIS PAT, PIMPY GIRL, WALKED IN WITH A SINGLE GEORGEY BAKED IN HER ARMS. SHE SET THE BAG ON THE EMPTY PHONE TABLE AND STUCK OUT HER HAND. HE FUMBLINGLY HUNG AT HIS FINGERS FOR THE MONEY, THEN MOTIONED TOWARD THE BUREAU AND TOLD HER TO TAKE WHATEVER HE OWED HER. THE FAT, PIMPY GIRL NAMED SHARON TOOK A DOLLAR MORE THAN SHE SHOULD HAVE BUT HE WOULD NEVER KNOW THAT...



USUALLY SHE STUFFED THE MONEY IN HER JEANS AND CLATTERED BACK DOWN THE HALL STAIRS IN A GREAT HURRY, SLAMMING THE DOOR LOUDLY BEHIND HER. TODAY, SHE HUNG AROUND HER ROOM. ANYHLE, LOOKING INSIDE TALKING IN HER JEAN LEGS AND STARRING OUT THE BRINY WINDOW. SHAKING AND TIPPING PINK BUBBLES SOON. HE SAT IN THE CHAIR AND GAZED AGENTLY AT HER FAT BUMP AND TRIED TO GUESS HER AGE. HE COULD NOT TELL HOW OLD YOUNG PEOPLE WERE ANYMORE. SHE MIGHT HAVE BEEN EIGHTEEN OR TWENTY...



THE ROOM SWELLED UP BUBBLE BUBBLE. HE STARTED TO SAY, *I HAD A BEAUTIFUL SPIDER MOM*, BUT REALIZED IT WOULD SOUND STUPID TO HER SO HE JUST STARED AT HER AND BLINKED HIS DARK-SPOTTED KNUCKLES AT LAST SHE SAID, *I ALMOST REMEMBERS YOUR NAME.* "HE HOPPED NOT KNOWING WHAT ELSE TO DO. STILL, HE WOULD NOT LEAVE. WHAT DID SHE WANT? *I THINK I'M ALMOSTING ALONGH.*" SHE SAID HE HOPPED, SHE STARED BACK, THEN SHE LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM ONCE, HOPPED A BUBBLE, SAID, "GIVE ME," AND SCIPPED DOWN THE STAIRS...



EVERY DAY SHE REQUEST THE SAME THING, A SIX-PACK OF PEPSI, THREE CANS OF CAMPBELL'S VEGETABLE SOUP, A DOLLAR WORTH OF BILT (HER CHOICE) AND BREAD AND SOAP IF HE NEEDED IT. IT WAS WHAT HE LIVED OFF OF. HE NEVER ORDERED MORE THAN HE COULD EAT AT ONE SITTING BECAUSE THE REACHERS WOULD GET INTO IT. IF THE WHEELER CHECK WAS LATE AND HE COULD NOT PAY HER RIGHT THEN, SHE COMPLAINED BUT ALWAYS CAME BACK ANYHAY. HE COULD NOT REMEMBER HER NAME OR WHERE SHE LIVED OR WHY SHE DID THIS FOR HIM...IT SEEMED SHE ALWAYS HAD...



SHE STRETCHED HER ARMS HIGH IN THE AIR AND BRUNTED, *YIP YOWWW JOWW.* " SHE SAID SHE STOOD IT IN A FULL MONTAGNE. THE FIFTY SEVEN GIVATHEIST RODE UP ON HER BACK WHEN SHE STRETCHED AND HE COULD SEE THE WHITE ROLL OF FLANK ABOVE THE JEAN TOPS FOR A MOMENT. THERE WERE PURPLES EVEN HERE. HE FELT SUDDENLY UNCOMFORTABLE. THE FAT GIRL HAD NEVER STARED THIS LONG BEFORE AND HE'D NEVER HAD TO ENDURE IN CONVERSATION WITH HER. HE WONDERED SHE WANTED SOMETHING BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT...



IT WAS GETTING LATE SO HE FIRST TURNED ON THE LIGHT, THEN PUT THE ORDERED IN THE SOAP BOX NEXT TO THE HOT PLATE. HE WAS ONE OF THE POORS AND PUT ON SOME WATER FOR TEA. HE WOULD HAVE THE FIRST PERSI UNTIL TOMORROW. THEY WERE GETTING EXPENSIVE WHILE HE WAS DOING THIS. A BEACH CRACKLED LATELY. ABBREVIATION OF THE WALL IN BACK OF THE SOAP BOX. HE STARTED TO ORDER IT, THEN THOUGHT OF SOMETHING...



HE PICKED UP A GLASS AND JABBED IT AT THE INSECT, TRAPPING IT AGAINST THE WALL. THEN HE SLIT A PIECE OF NEWSPAPER BETWEEN THE WALL AND THE GLASS AND CARRIED THE GLASS TO THE PHONE TABLE. HE BENT DOWN WITH A SNIDE AND GAZED AT THE CIRCULAR TUNNEL. HIGH ON THE CLUSTERING WALLS HE REMOVED THE NEWSPAPER AND SHOOK THE GLASS AT THE WEB...



THE MOMENT THE ROACH HIT THE SENSITIVE CABLES, AND SET OUT A SPIRRE OF VIBRATIONS. THERE WAS A MOVEMENT IN THE TUNNEL AND THE DARK, SPACE-LEGGED OWNER SHOT OUT A BLUR. IT HESITATED A MOMENT, JUST IN FRONT OF THE SPIDERS' ROACH AND HE COULD SEE ALL OF ITS BLACK, SLOTTING BODY--THEN IT POUNCED. HE COULD NOT SEE THE TINY RAILS SLIDING INTO THE ROACH'S CARAPACE BUT HE COULD DETECT THE SUDDEN FLASHING OF THE ROACH'S LEGS AND THEN THE GRADUAL SLOWING AS IT PUFFLED MADDESSLY AT THE AIR, BODY CROOKED WITH NUTRIOUS POISON...



AFTER A TIME, THE SPIDER MOVED ITS SLOOPY ABOBOMEN OVER THE ROACH'S PARALYZED BODY AND BEGAN A RHYTHMIC SPINNING MOTION WITH ITS LEGS, TURNING THE ROACH OVER AND OVER BEFORE IT. THE ROACH BEGAN TO CHANGE COLOR--A LIGHT GREEN--AND THEN HE REALIZED IT WAS BEING BOUND IN A TIGHT SWEATH OF WORKING. THE ROACH HAVING BEEN SURELY BOUND, THE SPIDER MOVED OVER IT ONCE MORE AND BEGAN LEISURELY DRINKING ITS JUICES...



HIS MOUTH FELL OPEN IN AWE, HE HURRIED BACK TO THE HOT PLATE, PREPARED HIS TEA AND PULLED THE SMALL WOODEN CHAIR OVER TO THE PHONE TABLE. HE SAT FOR OVER AN HOUR WATCHING THE SPIDER DRINK ROACH JUICE WHILE HE DRANK TEA. WHEN THE SPIDER AT LAST CLIMBED UP TO ITS BRICK PERCH, SLOATED AND SATED, THE OLD MAN SMILED AT IT "WELL DONE!" HE SAID...



HE COULD HARDLY SLEEP THAT NIGHT. HE COULDN'T WAIT TO GET TO THE LIBRARY THE NEXT MORNING AND CHECK OUT A BOOK ON SPIDERS. IT HAD BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE HE HAD BEEN INTERESTED ABOUT SOMETHING AND HE TOLD HIMSELF IT WAS SILLY TO BE FASCINATED ABOUT A SPIDER--THAT HE WAS A SENILE OLD MAN--BUT HE WENT ON BEING EXCITED ANYWAY. HE THOUGHT ABOUT THROWING ANOTHER ROACH INTO THE WEB BUT HE DIDN'T WANT TO DISTURB THE SPIDER'S SLEEP...



THE NEXT DAY WAS THE BEST HE COULD REMEMBER IN YEARS. THE WEATHER WAS BETTER AND HE WENT TO THE LIBRARY AND BROUGHT HOME A BOOK ON SPIDERS. HE READ IT COVER TO COVER. HE LEARNED THAT SPIDERS WERE NOT ABJECTS AT ALL, BUT SOMETHING FROM A FAMILY CALLED ARACHNIDS. HE SAW PICTURES OF WOLF SPIDERS, PHANTOM SPIDERS, WATER SPIDERS, AND LYNN SPIDERS, BUT HE COULD NOT FIND AN ILLUSTRATION THAT MATCHED THE SPIDER LIVING UNDER THE PHONE TABLE. SEVERAL PAGES WERE RIPPED OUT OF THE BOOK AND HE DECIDED HIS SPIDER MUST HAVE BEEN ON ONE OF THESE STILL. THE BOOK WAS FASCINATING...



HE BEGAN CATCHING ROACHES REGULARLY FOR THE SPIDER AND TOSSED THEM INTO THE WEB. SOON THERE WERE SO MANY INSECT CORPSES IN THE DELICATE FRANG-
WORK, THE SPIDER BEGAN DROPPING THEM TO THE FLOOR
IN A NEAT PILE. THEY WERE, IN TURN, SWIFT UP WITH
THE BROOM. THE AREA AROUND THE SPIDER'S WEB WAS
KEPT IMMACULATE AND THE SPIDER WAS NEVER TROUBLED
OR DISTURBED. HE DID BEGIN TO TALK TO THE SPIDER,
HOWEVER. USUALLY IT WAS WHEN HE WAS FEEDING IT.
"THERE'S A GOOD FAT ONE," HE WOULD SAY OR:
"LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THIS ONE, HOW BIG?!"



SOMETIMES HE WOULD SAY GOOD MORNING TO THE
SPIDER WHEN HE AWOKED AND HE FOUND HIMSELF
DROPPING IT WHEN HE CAME IN FROM HIS WALKS.
USUALLY, HE WOULD CLIMB UP IN THE BABY CHAIR
DURING THE WARM EVENINGS AND TELL THE SPIDER
WHATEVER WAS ON HIS MIND. HE DISCOVERED THAT
ONCE HE'D BEGUN, HE ENJOYED TALKING OUT LOUD
AND HE DID IT SO WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT. HE
ALSO DISCOVERED HE HAD A GREAT MANY THINGS
TO SAY, MOSTLY ABOUT HIS YOUTH AND A GIRL HE
HAD ONCE KNOWN...



IF THE SPIDER OBJECTED TO THE LENGTHY CONVERSATIONS
IT NEVER SHOWED IT. IT SIMPLY ATE CALMLY AND
SILENTLY IN ITS SILVERY TUNNEL, WAITING MOTIONLESS
FOR SOMETHING TO FALL INTO THE WEB. THE DAYS
PASSED... THE SUMMER WARMED. THE TWO MEN AND
SPIDER AND CAT IN THE APARTMENT. THE FAT, DIMPLE
GIRL DELIVERED THE GROCERIES AND HE PAID HER AND
TOOK HIS WALKS AND SAT IN THE BENCH OUTSIDE AND
RED AND TALKED TO THE SPIDER. HE DID NOT THINK
SO MUCH OF DEATH NOW...



THEN ONE MORNING HE AWOKE EARLIER THAN USUAL,
WITH A COLD BRIDGE ACROSS HIS CHEST. HE CLOSED
THE WINDOW AND STARTED TO FETCH ANOTHER BLANKET
FOR THE BED WHEN HE ABRUPTLY REMEMBERED SOME-
THING THE BOON HAD SAID ABOUT THE COLD. HE
RUSHED TO THE WEB AND FOUND THE SPIDER CURLED
IN A TIGHT BLACK BALL. HIS HEART LEAPED IN HIS
CHEST...



HE TURNED ON THE LIGHT. FOUND TWO FAT ROACHES HAD
PREPARED THEM INTO THE WEB. HE LOOKED ANXIOUSLY
AT THE SPIDER, BUT IT DID NOT MOVE. HE PULSED AND
MURMURED AND BLINKED HIS EYES. THE WOOD FLOOR
WAS COOL ON HIS BARE FEET AND HE HAD TO PUT HIS
SHOES ON. HE HAD NEVER BEEN SO URGENT IN HIS LIFE...



HE PULLED HIS CHAIR CLOSE TO THE WEB AND GAZED
WORRIEDLY AT THE SPIDER AND TALKED TO IT IN A
SOOTHING VOICE, ENCOURAGING IT TO MOVE. THE
SPIDER REMAINED CURLED INTO ITSELF. BY NOON THE
ROOM HAD WARMED CONSIDERABLY AND THE SPIDER AT
LAST FLUXED ITS DARK LEGS LACRIMALLY. BUT IT
WOULD NOT BUD. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY IT
WAS NOT HUNGRY. "HOW NOW? WHAT? TORMENT?
VOLUNTARILY? SACKIT?" HE ASKED IT. BUT IT JUST
SAT, MOTIONLESS...



HE DID NOT EAT HIMSELF ALL DAY. BY EVENING THE SPIDER HAD BEGUN TO GROW COOL AGAIN. THIS MADE THE SPIDER PEEK UP ITS LEGS AND BEGANNED JAWING NO MATTER HOW MANY BEACHES WERE POURED INTO THE WEB. THE FLOOD TURNED HOT AGAIN AND HE BANGED ON THE FROG AND CALLED FROM THE TOP OF THE SPIDER FOR HER. HANGING TO HING UP MORE HEAT. SHE REMIND THAT A FROG WAS BEHIND SOMEBODY...



HE RAN TO THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC IN THE STREET AND THE BRIGHT GLARE OF SUNLIGHT. HE MOVED IMMEDIATELY TO THE WEB AND FEEDER INTO IT. AT FIRST IT APPEARED EMPTY AND HE THOUGHT THE SPIDER HAD MOVED TO A WARMER SOMEWHERE ELSE. HE RAN IT AT LAST, HUNGLED TOGETHER LIKE A BLACK WINKLED FEA AT THE WARMEST POINT OF THE FLOOR, AS IF BEING THE WARMEST WORTHY OF THE DUAL. HE BIT HIS LIP AND HELD HIS HAND UP TO THE BASE. ELECTRIC BUILT TO WARM THEM. INSTANTLY, HE DIED OUT EASILY...



THEN, HE SAT DOWN ON THE CHAIR AND WATCHED THE WEB BANGLED. FOR AN HOUR NOTHING HAPPENED. THEN, AROUND TEN, THE SPIDER BEGAN UNDERTAKING HIS LEGS IN SLOW, ENLARGED MOVEMENTS. THE OLD MAN SMILED. HE GOT UP AND BEGAN SEARCHING FOR A FRESH BOUGH. THE COOL AND LIGHT HAD DRIVEN THEM INTO THE WALLS SO HE HAD TO LEAVE FOOT OUT ON THE TABLE...



HE PULLED AND SHOOK HIS HEAD AND CAST BANGFUL GLANCES AT THE MOTIONLESS WEB. BY MIDNIGHT THE ROOM WAS LIKE A FOOT LOCKER. HE BUNGLED UP IN HIS ONLY WINTER COAT AND LEFT BARELY BY PAINS. THOUGH HIS LEFT LEG WAS ACHING PAINFULLY, HE FOUND THAT A SHEET BRIDGE WAS FOLDING THROUGH THE ANCIENT WINDOW FRAME AND HE TOOK THE BLANKET FROM THE BED AND STUFFED IT INTO THE CRACKS. HE SLEPT IN THE CHAIR THAT NIGHT BEFORE THE SPIDER...



HE FILLED THE WOODEN CHAIR BENEATH THE DRAGGING LIGHT COORD AND BEGAN JERKING THE COORD FROM THE PLASTER-PLANNING CEILING WHERE SOMEONE HAD STUCK IT. HARDLY HE ALMOST FELL THREE AND HE KNEW THAT IF HE DID HE WOULD NEVER GET UP. WHEN HE HAD ENOUGH LENGTH OF COORD, HE RECONNECTED IT OVER THE PHONE TABLE AND DROPPED IT TO JUST A FEW FEET ABOVE THE WEB, TAPPING IT BACK TO THE CEILING WITH TACKING TAPE...



HE CAUGHT A LARGE FAT ONE AT LAST AND DROPPED IT INTO THE WEB. THE SPIDER DID NOT HESITATE AND HE WATCHED LAUGHING AS IT FEED THERE WAS A BAPPING ON THE FLOOR AND THE FAT FURRY GIRL CAME IN WITH AN ARMFUL OF GROCERIES. SHE SET THEM STOP THE PHONE TABLE. THEN STOOD LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW WITH HER HANDS ON HER HIPS AND HE SAT ACROSS THE ROOM, AWAY FROM THE WEB SO SHE WOULD NOT BOTHER THE SPIDER IF SHE HAPPENED TO NOTICE IT...



THE FAT, FATIGUED GIRL NAMED SHARON STOOD A LONG TIME LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AT THE GRAY BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET. THERE WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT HER TODAY BUT HE COULD NOT TELL WHAT AT FIRST. THEN, HE REALIZED SHE WAS WEARING A DRESS INSTEAD OF JEANS AND SHE WASN'T CHEWING GUM. SHE JUST STOOD LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW QUIETLY AND HE WISHED SHE WOULD LEAVE SO HE COULD CHECK ON THE SPIDER...



FINALLY, SHE TURNED AROUND TO HIM AND PINCHED HER LARGE BUTTOCKS AGAINST THE WINDOW SILL. SHE LOOKED STRAIGHT AT HIM AND THERE WAS A QUEER EXPRESSION ON HER FACE. ABRUPTLY, HE REALIZED THAT SHE HAD MADE A CLUMSY ATTEMPT TO APPLY MAKE UP TO HER MOUTHFACE. THERE WAS A DETERMINED, ALMOST ANGRY LOOK IN HER EYES. THEN SHE BLURTED IT OUT. "SUDDENLY... I CAN HAVE ANY BOY AT A SCHOOL!" HE STARED BACK AT HER WORDS...



A MUSCLE TWITCHED ON HER CHERRY CHEEK. "OH, JOE JOE JOE!" SHE SAID, VOICE TREMBLING WITH DEFIANCE. SHE GRABBED THE BOWLE OF HER DRESS SURELY AND TOOK IT OPEN. "LOOK AT ME! IT ALMOST AS HORRIBLE AS YOU!" HE STARED IN FULL SURPRISE AT THE PALE, LIMPY GLOVES OF HER BASTARDS, ROTTER HERE AND THERE WITH WHITES. THIS HAD SURPRISED IN THE LITTLE ROOM. THEN, A SOB BROKE IN HER THROAT AND SHE RAN FROM THE ROOM, DOWN THE CATTERING STAIRS, WITHOUT CLOSING THE DOOR OR GETTING HER MONEY...



HE SAT BLANKING A MOMENT, THEN RUSHED BACK TO THE SPIDER. IT WAS EATING LEISURELY IN THE CENTER OF THE WEB AND HE SWOOPED AND WATCHED IT ANYWAY. THEN, HE MADE HIMSELF SOME TEA AND ATE ONE OF THE APPLES IN THE GROCERY BASKET. HE LEFT THE LIGHT BULB ON ALL NIGHT...



THE NEXT MORNING HE WENT BACK TO THE LIBRARY TO RETURN THE BOOK AND BOUGHT A SPARE LIGHT BULB AT HOLDS' MARKET. HIS ARTHRITIS WAS GETTING UP AGAIN AND IT WAS A PAINFUL EFFORT TO CLIMB THE LONG FLIGHT OF STAIRS TO HIS ROOM. SOME MORE. WHEN HE OPENED THE DOOR, HE CRIED OUT IN SURPRISE. BARRY WAS SITTING IN HIS EASY CHAIR AND A FREIGHT GIRL WAS MOWING ABOUT THE ROOM WITH A DUST CLOTH...



BARRY JUMPED UP WITH A BIG GRIN, CLAPPING HIM ON THE BACK AND TOLD HIM HOW GREAT HE LOOKED AND HOW GLAD HE WAS TO SEE HIM AND WHY HE'NT HE WRITTEN. HE INTRODUCED HIS WIFE ANNE AND EXPLAINED THAT THE BABY WAS DUE SOON AND WHAT WAS THE CHANCE OF BORROWING A FEW BLANKS TO BUY THE BO A PRESENT? ANNE STOOD SILENTLY BEHIND BARRY LIKE A DODGY MOUSE AND HOPED HE DIDNT FIND THAT SHE'D THROB UP A BIT FOR HIM ON ACCOUNT OF THAT WAS THE LEAST THEY COULD DO FOR HIM...



HIS EYES FELL IN SHOCKED AMAZEMENT OVER THE LATELY BROOKING ROOM, THE CLEANED DISHES, THE WASHED WINDOW, THE EMPTY BARTRAGE, THE SHREPT FLOOR. HE COULD NOT, FINDING HIS VOICE, HE SAID LIKE THE SOUND OF A STUCK RECORD. THE PHONE TABLE WAS RUINED AND ONLY THE SPIDER'S WEB WAS GONE...



HE SAT IN THE CHAIR ALL THE MORNING OF THAT DAY AND STARED AT THE EMPTY SPACE WHERE THE WEB HAD BEEN. WHEN NIGHT CAME AND THE ROOM GREW DARKER, HIS BODY TOLD HIM TO GET UP AND INTO BED BUT HIS HAND WOULD NOT LISTEN. HE CONTINUED TO SIT QUIETLY AND STARE AT THE EMPTY SPACE EVEN WHEN THE BLANKET FELL OUT OF THE WINDOW SILL AND IT BECAME ALMOST FREEZING IN THE ROOM...



THE ARTHRITIS WAS BACK, WORSE THAN EVER, NEARLY UNBEARABLE. THE PAIN MADE HIM GASP, THEN A MOMENT CALM, THEN HE LOOKED DOWN. TO HIS AMAZEMENT AND JOY HE SAW THE SPIDER CRAWLING OVER THE ARM OF HIS CHAIR. HIS HAND DROPPED EVER BRIGHTENED A MOMENT. ONE OF THE SPIDER'S LEGS WAS MISSING BUT IT HAD SOMEHOW SQUEEZED THE PREGNANT SEED'S DUST CLOTH. HE STRETCHED OUT A TREMBLING FINGER TO IT...



HE SCREAMED AT THEM. HE SHOUTED AND STUMBLED ABOUT THE ROOM AND THREW A BOOK AND FEEL WARM TEARS ON HIS CHEEKS. BARRY BACKED AWAY IN CONFLATED DANGER AND THE PREGNANT SEED HED BEHIND HIM AND PULLED AT HIS SHIRT WITH LITTLE FEAR MOUSE HANDS UNTIL SHE'D MANAGED TO PULL HIM CLEAR OUT THE ROOM AND DOWN THE STAIRS. THE LAST THING BARRY YELLED UP FROM THE FLOORING STAIRWELL WAS: "GRANDY OLD SHIRTHEAD!" AND IT SEEMED TO RING FOREVER IN HIS EARS. LONG AFTER HE'D SETTLED HIMSELF INTO THE BABY CHAIR...



HE SAT IN THE CHAIR UNMOVING FOR THREE DAYS. SOMETIMES HE SLEPT AND SOMETIMES HE SIMPLY STARED AT THE EMPTY SPACE. HE COULD NOT FIND A REASON TO GET OFF OF THE CHAIR SO HE DID NOT. BY THE FOURTH MORNING HE WAS TOO WEAK TO GET OUT EVEN IF HE WANTED TO. THE PAIN, FINALLY GONE, NEVER CAME AGAIN. HE SMOKED THAT AFTERNOON TO SEE WARM SUN STREAMING THROUGH THE WINDOW AND FEEL A TERRIBLE PAIN IN HIS ARM AND KNEE...



THE BLACK SWOLLEN BODY WITH THE JOYOUS HOUS-GLASS ON ITS BELLY CLAMBERED OVER HIS FINGER. HE FELT A QUICK, SHARP STINGING IN HIS FINGER-TIP THAT PASSED SOON. THEN HE SMILED AS THE SPIDER BEGAN SPINNING A WEB BETWEEN HIS LEG AND THE ARMREST. THE ARTHRITIS PAIN IN HIS SHOULDER AND KNEE FADED LIKE THE DRYING DRY AND HE KNEW HE WOULD NOT BE BOTHERED BY IT EVER AGAIN. SOON HIS EYESIGHT WAS IMPROVING TOO BUT HE NO LONGER CARED NOW. "HAPPY BIRTHDAY, BARRY..." HE WHISPERED TO THE SPIDER WITH HIS FINAL BREATH AND IT WAS THE GENTLEST SOUND IN THE SMALL, DARK, SILENT ROOM...





**SUN RUNNERS 2.
COMING IN JANUARY.**

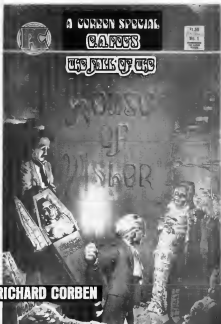


PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.



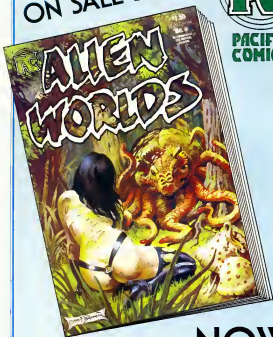
FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER COMING IN FEBRUARY

A TERRIFYING GRAPHIC ADAPTATION OF
EDGAR ALLAN POE'S HORROR CLASSIC



PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

ON SALE SOON



THE FUTURE IS ... **NOW!**

Written & Edited by **BRUCE JONES**